

## Placement Agencies – What Do They Do?

Candace Roeder

A Placement Agency or Service is simply a business (usually for-profit) that helps seniors who need “placement” outside of the home. A good Placement Agency’s objective is to help seniors to locate out-of-home living options that meet certain criteria; 1. Housing and care that is in alignment with what the senior needs (and, hopefully with an eye towards potential future needs); 2. Is of a price the senior can afford (preferably for the long haul); 3. Housing which is geographically desirable to the senior (near friends, family, church and other support systems).

Placement Agencies request very specific information about the senior which includes medical diagnoses, physical abilities and limitations, current medications, personality traits, nighttime habits, sleep habits, diet needs/limitations, where, geographically, the senior would prefer to reside and finally, how much the senior can afford to pay. The Agency then takes all of this information and looks for the facilities that would appear to match the very specific needs of the senior.

A really good “fit” can only be found though if the senior has been completely honest and forthcoming with the information they have provided the Agency. A really good Agency will have visited dozens if not hundreds of licensed facilities prior to this and will have compiled copious information on the facilities in the region. Each and every facility is different – I cannot stress this strongly enough. Even though there may be 327 Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (RCFE) and 88 Assisted Living Facilities (ALF) there are really important variables to each and every one of them and knowing these nuances is what it takes to help someone make a successful move.

The truth of the matter is *anyone* can say they do Placement work. There isn’t any industry licensing, an oversight agency or set standards to follow. There are a few Placement Agencies in the greater Sacramento area who have a stellar reputation and have been serving our area for many years. These agencies truly have the senior’s best interests at heart; they have a good reputation both with the senior community as well as the housing industry. Sadly though, there are now individuals and companies doing Placement work who do not have the senior’s best interests at heart.

Customarily a Placement Agency only gets paid for their work if the senior decides to move into a facility the agency has recommended – it’s very much like a finder’s fee – and it’s the facility that pays the fee, not the senior.

If you find yourself in need of a Placement Agency, be sure you feel confident that the agency you engage has your best interests at heart. Find out how long they have been in the business. Talk to your friends, family and neighbors who have used the services of a Placement Agency and go with one that comes highly recommended, preferably by more than one source. Shop around until you find someone who loves what they do and who is passionate about seniors.

By the way, it never really makes sense to try to go it alone on this one. Use a Placement Agency. It doesn’t cost the senior a dime and it will save you a tremendous amount of time and angst.

It’s all about the fit. It is typical for a Placement Agency to provide the senior with several, “matched” or recommended options to consider. Be sure to visit as many of the recommended facilities as you can. Ask for a tour, spend some time looking around. If outside space is important to you, be sure to check that out. Talk to the residents, ask about the types of meals served – sample one if possible - and spend some time with the caregivers. When it comes to the smaller facilities known as Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (RCFE) frequently the caregivers are also the owners.

You really want to make sure you are comfortable with the caregivers and the other residents because you are going to be spending a lot of time with them. If you like to be active, make sure you observe the facility being active. On the other hand, for someone who wants to remain as active as possible to move into a facility where the majority of the residents have dementia isn’t likely going to work out. See several facilities, as I said in the last column, each and every one of them is different.

Also, when an out of home living option becomes necessary, it is important for you to know there is more to the process than simply choosing and moving in. Once you have found a place you think you would like, the Administrator of that

facility will need to do their own assessment of your needs to make sure he or she agrees that it is a good fit. You will need to have paperwork completed by your physician and TB clearance.

Then there will be paperwork to read, complete and sign. Remember, it is important to read the paperwork to make sure you are getting what you think you are getting. Is the monthly fee all inclusive or are there additional fees? If there are additional fees, they should be spelled out and very specific.

There is a lot to think about and a lot to know. Make sure you have good help.

*Candace Roeder is the Executive Director of Seniors First, a nonprofit agency serving Placer County seniors. If you have a senior-related question for Candace, you may write or email her at Seniors First, 11566 D Avenue, Auburn, CA 95603, Attn: A Time For Seniors. Her email address is [Candace@seniorsfirst.org](mailto:Candace@seniorsfirst.org). Please be sure to place 'A Time For Seniors' in the subject line. Also, include your name and telephone number as well as your email address (if you have one). More information is available at [www.seniorsfirst.org](http://www.seniorsfirst.org)*

*It is the overall goal of the Placer Older Adult Advisory Commission to promote the well-being and to enhance the quality of life for older adults of Placer County by advising the Placer County Board of Supervisors and the Placer Department of Health and Human Services on issues affecting the lives of older adults. Meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 1:00 p.m. For more information:*

<http://www.placer.ca.gov/Departments/hhs/adult/OlderAdultAdvisoryCommission.aspx>

*or by calling the Public Authority at (530) 886-3680.*